

### **Come, Holy Spirit**

Grace, peace, & mercy, from our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ. Please join me in prayer. As we close our eyes, imagine the fresh breeze blowing in on us. Allow this breeze to free our minds and see the Grace of God falling down on us this day. Grant us the ability to be your disciples and your followers. In Jesus Name we pray. Amen.

Consider the wind. A mild and soft wind blows leaves on the trees; gentle gusts lift kites into the sky; the wind can add to the strength of waves crashing against the ocean shore. A breeze blows and ignites a flame from a smoldering coal. A steady wind propels a windmill to power the lights in a home or run a water pump. We cannot see the wind, yet we feel its presence and know its power. Recently, we've seen the destruction of tornadoes and hurricanes. We know the wind because of its effects. We are able to use the wind's energy--but we cannot create or control the wind. All we can do is to either cooperate with it, harness it, or resist it.

Is it any wonder that Luke, the writer of Acts, uses the imagery of wind to articulate the power & work of the Spirit of God? In Hebrew and Greek, the word *ruah* means "wind" or Spirit" or "breath" depending on how it is used. In the creation story in Genesis, we hear of the *ruah* or "breath" of God coming to create the world. In the Gospel of John, after the resurrection, Jesus appears to his disciples and *breathes* on them, telling them, "Receive the Holy Spirit." Earlier in John's Gospel, Jesus confounds Nicodemus with the play on words between wind and spirit, "The wind blows where it will and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." This interplay between *wind, spirit, and breath*, stretches back to the beginning of the creation story in Genesis. The Spirit of God stretches over the face of the waters." We are invited to imagine the breath of God stirring the waters of creation. The shared meaning can draw us more deeply into the mystery of the Holy Spirit, as we reflect on how the Spirit continues to blow through us like the wind--inspiring us and calling us into a clearer vision of God's love for the world.

With a sound like the rush of a mighty wind the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples in the second chapter of Acts. "Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each one of them." The divine power of wind and flame, intertwined--igniting the disciples' mission. As exciting as the tongues of fire, is that people are no longer bound by their

own languages, proclaiming the good news of God to crowds at the Jerusalem festival of Pentecost. And 3000 people were added to the number that day. Powerful Spirit!

People from throughout the entire region marveled at this ragtag collection of Galileans who spoke to them using their native languages. Some scoffed and dismissed this as being the result of too much wine while others were amazed wondering, “What does this mean?” Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Peter began to preach to the crowd, his voice emerged from the commotion to explain what is happening. He quotes the prophet Joel, “In the last days it will be, God declares, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and daughters shall prophesy... Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

Just as Pentecost dawned anew, we can also have a new beginning. I have observed many ways in which that 1st Pentecost is given new meaning in this age of the Covid-19 pandemic. Just like the disciples, we have been sheltering in our homes. When the Holy Spirit was given to the disciples that day, they were born anew, given new life. We too, as we emerge from our time of “Stay Safe--Stay Home,” we see life anew, refreshed. Perhaps good things shall emerge. We pray we have learned new things about ways to be in touch, ways to care.

At his ascension, Jesus told his disciples, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” As we see the book of Acts play itself out, we see Spirit-filled disciples grow into that mission. The Spirit transforms the disciples into bold apostles, witnesses to Christ’s resurrection. The Spirit inspires Peter to speak to the amazed crowd and to proclaim good news to God’s saving grace and power. Despite hardship, opposition, imprisonment and death--the disciples--empowered by the Holy Spirit--carry the ministry of Jesus forward into the beginning life of the Church. They reach out with compassion to heal the sick, care for widows, and to provide for those who are poor or hurting. The Spirit guides the fledgling Christian community, forging its characteristics of generosity, mission, service and faithfulness.

The Spirit transforms the zeal of Saul, persecutor of the faith, into Paul, the tireless proclaimer of the gospel of Jesus. The Spirit got his attention by knocking Saul off his horse on the road to Damascus. In the baptism of the Ethiopian official, the Spirit empowered Phillip to baptize the Ethiopian and the Spirit “snatched Phillip away.” Through the conversion of Cornelius, a Roman centurion, the Spirit stretches Peter to see that God’s love encompasses the Gentiles as well as the Jews. By the end of Acts, the small gathering of disciples had grown into a vast community of believers, stretching from Jerusalem to Rome.

In the midst of our diversity of ethnic origin, culture, and language, the Spirit draws us into a common experience of God's inclusive love and mercy. The Holy Spirit is at work so that the saving news of God can be heard by all, drawing everyone into a common community. The Holy Spirit speaks so that we all can hear and understand, no matter who we are or where we come from. The gift of Pentecost is that there is room for all in God's realm.

The Spirit is blowing among God's people today--kindling faith, breathing life into the church, even when our doors could not be open. The Spirit is inspiring and empowering us for mission. Like the crowds on Pentecost, the Spirit can catch us by surprise, shaking us up with new expressions of God's love. The Spirit blows anew among God's people, stirring us to renewed vision and hope. The Spirit infuses us with mission to proclaim the good news of God. The Spirit sends us out into the world to serve all people in the name of Jesus. With the whole church, we pray, "Come Holy Spirit. Breathe into us, set our hearts afire, and empower us for lives of witness and ministry, for love and compassion, for new ideas while cherishing our traditions." We pray you would be with us all as we proclaim your Word made flesh in the person of Jesus the Christ.

Amen.